5. Empowering of the Election Commission of India to fix Ceiling on Election Expenses before every general election:

Periodic revision of election expenses may continue to be done by the Central Government in consultation with the Election Commission of India as at present.

Failure of companies in fulfilling their statutory obligations

126. SHRI C RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that thousands of companies, which have been registered, have failed to file their annual reports and balance sheets and fulfil their statutory obligations;

(b) if so, the details thereof, regionwise;

(c) the steps taken by Government to trace the missing companies; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken by Government to prevent such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (a) and (b)The number of companies which have not filed their Annual Accounts for 1997-98 so far is given below regionwise:

Region	No. of companies (both Private Limited and Public Limited)
Northern	74339
Western	73180
Eastern	34673
Southern	65143

(c) and (d) A Special Cell has been constituted in the Department of Company Affairs to take action against vanishing companies which had raised capital through public issues in coordination with Securities Exchange board of India (SEBI). Regional Directors and Registrar of Companies have been directed to take steps in respect of companies which have received money through public issues and a!so to issue default notices to companies and their Managing Director, Whole-time Directors, Managers and Ordinary Directors which have not filed Annual Accounts and Annual Returns by due date.

Appointment of SCs and STs as Supreme Court Judges

127. SHRI N. R. DASARI:
SHRI NAGENDRA NATH OJHA:

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Hon'ble President has recommended that persons belonging to weaker sections of society like SCs and STs and women be given due consideration in the appointment of Supreme Court Judges; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and what efforts are being made to identify eligible persons from these categories for appointments to various courts, as judges?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRl M. THAMBI DURAI): (a) and (b) Correspondence exchanged between the Constitutional authorities on appointment of Judges is confidential in nature and, therefore, cannot be disclosed.

The appointment of Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts is made in terms of Article 124 and Article 217 of the Constitution of India respectively, which do not provide for reservation for any caste or class of persons. The Government have, however, addressed letters to the Chief Ministers of the States and the Chief Justices of the High Courts from time to time requesting them to locate suitable persons from the Bar belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other Backward Classes, Minorities and Women for appointment as High Court Judges.

Expressway between Calcutta and Guwahati

128. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state: (a) whether Government propose to build an Express Highway between Calcutta and Guwahati;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) the details of proposals finalised to provide better road linkage to North- East;